

Roll Call

The Kalamazoo City Commission met as a Committee of the Whole on Monday, May 2, 2022 at 5:00 p.m. in the City Commission Chambers at City Hall.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Mayor David Anderson
Vice Mayor Don Cooney
Qianna Decker
Jeanne Hess
Stephanie Hoffman
Esteven Juarez
Chris Praedel

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:

None

Also present were City Manager Jim Ritsema, Deputy City Manager Jeff Chamberlain, City Attorney Clyde Robinson, and City Clerk Scott Borling.

Public Comments

Next, an opportunity was given for general public comments.

In Person Comments

Jeff Messer, City resident, noted Jeff Breneman, who would be presenting to the Commission about Western Michigan University (WMU), was on the Downtown Development Authority and Downtown Economic Growth Authority Boards. Mr. Messer acknowledged that WMU was exempt from City ordinances but pointed out ways that the university routinely violated City ordinances and state laws, such as the Open Meetings Act. A copy of Mr. Messer's written remarks was filed with the papers for this meeting.

Julie Jensen presented herself as a judicial candidate for the 9th Circuit Court and discussed her credentials.

Call-In Comments

None

2022-00

Presentation: Western
Michigan University

Jeff Breneman, Vice President for Government Relations for Western Michigan University, and Kara Wood, Associate Vice President for Community Partnerships, delivered a presentation entitled *Government Relationships and Community Partnerships: Kalamazoo City Commission, May 2, 2022*. A copy of the slides from this presentation was filed with the papers for this meeting.

In response to comments and questions from Commissioners, Mr. Breneman and Ms. Wood provided the following information:

- WMU was working on the issues of youth mental health and substance abuse.
- the City had been good at communicating with the university regarding safety in the area around Fraternity Village Drive. Regarding other actions the City could take to help with this issue, there were longer-term plans that would need to be funded.
- there had not been any conversations at WMU regarding the impact of the Federal Census.

- WMU had engaged residents of the Arcadia Neighborhood on specific issues but had not done any broad canvassing due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- if the university had experts in the areas of homelessness and housing security, they would be willing to help the City.
- One Small Step, a program that recorded conversations between people with opposing viewpoints, would be coming to Kalamazoo to record these stories, and over 100 would be needed to participate.
- after the November election, the Governor may revisit appointments to university boards that were not confirmed by the Michigan Senate, such as the appointment of Jon Hoadley to the WMU Board of Trustees.

Vice Mayor Cooney suggested the School of Education partner with the City in its youth development initiative, and specifically the idea of having evening “study hall” times in Kalamazoo Public School buildings.

Commissioner Praedel encouraged WMU to partner with the City on its youth development initiative, and he expressed interest in having representatives from the Western Student Association and Graduate Student Association meet with the City Commission.

Commissioner Hess stated the impact of WMU on the City was transformational.

Mayor Anderson noted the fortunes of the City and university were linked.

Josh Hilgart, Executive Director of Kalamazoo Defender, delivered a presentation on the mission and work of Kalamazoo Defender, including current and future initiatives. Information provided by Mr. Hilgart was included with the papers for this meeting.

In response to questions from Commissioners, Mr. Hilgart provided the following information:

- Kalamazoo Defender handled 5,000 court cases on an annual basis.
- The Village had handled 600 social service cases during the pilot program.
- it was too early in the program for recidivism data. In other places, the combination of legal counsel and social services had reduced recidivism and, for those who committed crimes again, had resulted in lesser crimes with sentences were less severe. Providing social services also improved client participation and response to their court cases.

Vice Mayor Cooney commended the work of Kalamazoo Defender as “visionary.”

Commissioner Juarez remarked that The Village program was great, and he was eager to see the outcomes.

2022-00

Presentation: Western Michigan University
(cont'd)

2022-00

Presentation: Kalamazoo Defender

Commissioner
Comments

Next, an opportunity was given for comments from City Commissioners.

Commissioner Hess remarked on the educational component in each of the presentations and suggested the City claim “education” as one of its distinctive characteristics.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 6:13 p.m.

Scott A. Borling
City Clerk

Approved by the City Commission on: _____

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